

Promising Practice: Collaboration with OneStop Pima Community College Pathways to Healthcare

A partnership works best when both parties understand their roles and are motivated to work together. Pima Community College's (PCC) Pathways to Healthcare, a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) project funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance, has enjoyed the benefits of such a partnership by working hand-in-hand with the Pima County One Stop (PCOS). While the College has worked with the One Stop for over a decade, the relationship between Pathways to Healthcare and PCOS has strengthened this partnership and is a prime example of a successful HPOG collaboration.

Pima County One Stop is the primary partner to the Pathways to Healthcare program, assisting with a number of mission-critical tasks such as intake and assessment. Indeed, due to its efficient referral process, PCOS is the entry point for many of the program's clients. This referral typically begins at one of the hour-long HPOG orientation sessions delivered by PCC staff 3-4 times a week at PCOS and PCC locations. Interested attendees complete a Student Interest Survey, which collects contact information and asks individuals about the types of health careers in which they are interested. Individuals can also sign up for a TABE testing session, which PCOS administers at a subsequent appointment.

After taking the TABE, participants set up an eligibility appointment with PCOS staff. Individuals who are eligible for the Pathways to Healthcare program are assigned a PCOS Workforce Development Specialist (WDS), as well as one of four PCC Student Services Advanced Specialists (SSAS), one of whom is co-located at PCOS. These two specialists will review the individual's assessments and work with him or her to develop a personalized Training Plan that outlines the desired career pathway and training programs in which the student will enroll. The WDS also assists the individual in completing a number of professional preparatory activities such as an employability skills workshop and personal budget development, and ensures they are enrolled in the proper training courses.

Once an individual is in training, the WDS provides case management supports and coordinates the student's access to both community services funded by the Pathways to Healthcare program and those available through regular public programs such as TANF, child care assistance, rental assistance, and transportation. The WDS also approves HPOG-funded emergency services and ensures that participants have access to all PCOS job development services. Following placement, the WDS follows up with newly employed students.

Pathways to Healthcare leadership Brian Stewart and Amanda Abens shared a number of additional collaborative practices. To ensure the best provision of case management services, for instance, PCOS has granted the Pathways program access to its client database system. With access to the same client information, the WDS and SSAS keep one another updated on each individual's needs, and share employment data, transcripts, and college readiness progress. The

benefits of this information sharing fall on the students: services are provided quickly and efficiently and redundancy is eliminated. PCC and PCOS staff also participate in joint professional development exercises, allowing staff to “put faces to names” and improve procedures and services.

Collaboration occurs at the leadership level as well. PCOS and Pathways to Healthcare leadership meet bi-monthly and communicate regularly. As both partners have a vested interest in the success of the program, they use a joint-hiring process where leadership from both organizations interview potential Pathways staff.

Mr. Stewart and Ms. Abens have a number of recommendations to other HPOG grantees looking to strengthen their partnerships with their local OneStop centers. First and foremost is to acknowledge your partner’s goals and strategic needs. By understanding their perspective, you can better identify the potential benefits that result from collaboration. Second, work with your partner organization to break apart and analyze the systems and processes that are currently used. By examining processes together, partners can identify redundancies and areas to improve. It also increases understanding of the processes, and builds buy-in from both partners. Lastly, Mr. Stewart and Ms. Abens recommend co-locating with partners, if possible.

Promising Practice: 10-Week College Readiness Program Pima Community College

Pima Community College has implemented a 10-week college readiness program designed to assist students who do not possess the academic competencies needed to begin training. The program's goals are to prepare students to pass the necessary entrance/assessment tests, complete their HPOG health care training, and achieve success on the job.

The program is delivered in a classroom environment, 24 hours a week, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (with 30 minutes for lunch), Monday–Thursday. Average class size is about 15, and students are required to attend at least 80 percent of the sessions; an attendance rate lower than this will cause the student to be dropped from the class. The class consists of multiple components:

- Reading and writing (8–10 hours per week)
- Math (8–10 hours per week)
- Community Building (1–4 hours per week)
- College and career success (2–4 hours per week)

An orientation to the college readiness program includes descriptions of the roles of the County OneStop and the College Student Services and the purpose and expectations of the class. Students are also provided with contact information for key offices and advisors. These advisors assist students outside the classroom throughout the 10-week period with a number of activities, including campus tours, fingerprinting, completing the college application process, getting the necessary immunizations, and taking the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).

Instructor philosophy is one of learner-directed methods (e.g., class brainstorming), with a focus on contextualized healthcare learning, critical thinking, and application of concepts. Instructors also use hands-on and experiential learning when possible and model the soft skills and professionalism that will be needed both throughout the training program and in the workplace. While instructors use a curriculum outline as a guide, they encourage students to reflect on what they already know as well as what knowledge gaps they need to fill. Student responses inform the instructors' lesson plans, allowing the students to feel a sense of ownership towards their education. As a result, students who would normally resist the idea of studying soft skills or basic math now feel comfortable, confident, and invested enough to accept coaching in these areas. Instructors also make themselves available outside of class hours, giving students an opportunity to discuss any issues they may be having. According to HPOG program manager Amanda Abens and HPOG director Brian Stewart, one of the course's most compelling elements is the sense of community that develops among the students. Celebrating small achievements and allowing students to form organic peer-mentoring relationships helps personalize the college and ease new or nontraditional students' transition into college-level courses. The support given to students by instructors and peers also allows them to focus on success, with instructors helping students set both short-term and long-term goals. As Ms. Abens describes it, the college readiness environment moves students from "crisis mode" to "planning mode."

Ms. Abens and Mr. Stewart have a number of recommendations for other HPOG programs looking to develop college readiness courses. Foremost among them is being aware of the needs of the students. Letting students provide input on the direction and content of the class

makes them feel invested and motivated and helps strengthen the bond between instructor and students. Instructors should be experienced in adult education and be willing to work at the students' pace; a background in healthcare is an added bonus. Ms. Abens and Mr. Stewart also pointed out that, because their 10-week class is non-credit, program staff and instructors can modify and adapt the curriculum without going through the process required to change for-credit courses. This freedom has also allowed Pima to develop a college readiness "open lab" and has encouraged them to plan a contextualized English-as-a-second-language prep class. Pima's 10-week college readiness program allows students to form bonds with peers and instructors and leads them to feel a sense of ownership and control over their education. In students who have completed this program, Pima's HPOG staff have noticed an increase in motivation, a bettering of attitude, and an increased willingness to seek assistance.

Grantee: Pima Community College

State: Arizona

Community Type: N/A

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Occupational Sub-Category: N/A